PERSPECTIVE AND CHALLENGES OF E-TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

SYNOPSIS

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Introduction

The revolution of the Internet and information and communication technology (ICTs) in India has had already insightful repercussions for the tourism industry. An entire gadget of Communication Technologies and the Internet has been unexpectedly subtle for the duration of Indian tourism sectors. Subsequently, on line journey bookings and related journey offerings are popular as one of the maximum thriving e-trade implementations.

Tourism has intently been linked to development of Information and communication system for over 10 years in India. The tourism industry to begin with focused on making use of information system to boom performance in processing of information and effective distribution.

Using e-business processes and (IT) information technology to develop methodologies and techniques and to provide visitors with high-quality & low-cost tourism services is what we mean when we say "e-tourism" (Dwyer, 2004). E-commerce (E-com.), e-research & development, creation of content, and the e-supply of services in digital or communicational content are some examples of the several facets of business that are included under this umbrella term. The travel & tourism industry is the largest and most profitable business sector in the world. In the latter years of the 20th century, India was a pioneer in the development, creation, and development of the field of e-tourism. It is because of the web revolution and its usefulness that visitors are more interested in learning about locations, amenities, availabilities, costs, geography and climate, and the current situation of friendly relations. Travel businesses began offering additional services like hotel, airline, automobile, & bus reservations online as a consequence of rising of e-commerce. strategies in the tourism industry. The Internet's continuous and unstoppable rise necessitates businesses to implement an Internet marketing strategy. The rapidly expanding tourism industry (TI) is also undergoing change as a result of the increasing importance of technology both in terms of the services it provides and the destinations that promote tourism (Kuflik and colleagues, 2015).

The Tourism industry in Himachal Pradesh (HP) provides seven percent to the overall GDP of the state. The implication that rural areas (RA) make up 99.5 percent of HP total land area is one of the primary reasons that this state was chosen for the purpose of researching the growth of e-tourism. The

HP govt. estimates that about ninety percent of the state's entire population lives in rural areas.[1] Both these reasons present favourable prospects for the conduct of this study in the selected region. Rural tourism has been studied and used as a tool for economic and social development in a variety of ways (Wilson and colleagues, 2001). It is now widely acknowledged as an economic force for the entire rural areas as well as the economic activity that is connected to it, whether directly or indirectly. E-tourism and its various offshoots have gained widespread support as an unconventional strategy for the economic growth of rural areas in a number of regions of the world. The benefits of e-tourism are not limited to seeing tourism as a community product; rather, e-tourism has been seen as a medicine in recent times for prospective tourists with more stressful jobs, environments in cities, greater concern for the environment, and a desire to see the unseen. It's not uncommon for researchers to focus on the benefits of e-tourism, but it's also important to consider the drawbacks, like rising prices, modifications in local cultural traits, and so on if e-tourism grows and develops (Egbali et al., 2011).

Most of the existing investigations which correlates with the research subject is more focused on the favourable and unfavourable elements of e-tourism. Global or national-level tracking of macro-level digital literacy targets is a major focus of most research papers relating to this issue, which supports the current study rationale. The study's reasoning is mostly based on a research challenge identified in (for) identifying prospective and challenges of e-tourism in Himachal Pradesh's hill state with poor economic levels of people, restricted ways of employment, and severe geographical circumstances. The continuous study (research) is justified in large part by changes in distribution patterns for different items (both for purchase and sale) across the world. Customers' demand patterns' paradigm change, greater value from purchasing choices with ease, well-developed logistics' and supply chain fulfilling the objectives established by current ultra-modern technology are significant factors to concentrate on the study subject.

As a phenomenon, tourism can potentially improve the lives of a wider segment of society via its multiplier impact. E-tourism and its digital inclusion are increasingly

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[1] *About Himachal Pradesh: Information on tourism, industries, geography* (no date) *India Brand Equity Foundation*. Available at: https://www.ibef.org/states/himachal-pradesh (Accessed: June 13, 2022).

focused on the progress of technology and its use in tourist operations by rural tourism operators and the local population, but this is still in its early stages. Due to the concept of globalization, the current study is an exploratory work to engage academicians, policymakers, and other stakeholders in drawing attention to an important topic of research for creating future-ready e-tourism enterprises in Himachal Pradesh using technology as a major tool to attract quality visitors from all over the world. In a nutshell, the need for today's current study is based on the premises of prospective and challenges, as well as the benefits that can be sought by the travel agencies in Himachal Pradesh from their developing environment, thereby creating a mechanism of self-governed, self-owned, self-promoted, and self-sustaining tourism economies in the region.

Literature Review

Fayos-Sola (2002) mentioned that the key industry contributing to the global economy in today's globe is none other than tourism. Most nations, particularly developing countries, depend heavily on tourism for infrastructural development, economic stability, the growth of private organisations, and the provision of job opportunities. Underdeveloped nations must properly care for its tourist industry in order to ensure future development possibilities and economic stability in the country, since their other businesses, such as industrial units or natural reservoirs, are insufficient to meet economic demand.

Koufaris et al. (2002), customers' past experience with a product influences the content of online search information. Because repeat consumers have previously used a product at least once, their motivations to seek knowledge vary from those of new customers. The uniqueness of the website may be highly significant to new clients, but it may not be for returning customers. Other criteria, such as more thorough service, product availability, and more experience knowledge, matter more to return consumers. There is virtually little research on product knowledge, online information demands, and content preferences.

Chaffey (2010), on the other hand, feels there are grounds to anticipate that a rookie visitor would seek out different material and types of information than a more seasoned traveller acquainted with a certain place. Other impacts may be explained by changes in the aims and objectives of travellers. Consumption knowledge is created in tandem with social contacts in the pattern of relationships

established in virtual travel communities of consumption. As a result, the interaction mode may shift from informative to relational, then recreational, and eventually transformative.

On the other hand, the ability to assert company image as well as brand while also promoting relational marketing is an advantage of digital communication, as per McMahan and colleagues. According to the study, the connection between the brand as well as the amount of time spent online and on the specific webpage is also mentioned. For formal company to keep stakeholders, the use of company website to boost brand recognition is becoming increasingly common. It has become more important for companies & institutions to examine and evaluate the quality of their organizational communication on the Internet.

Romaine Picot & Clement (2010) in the research study named "Tourism: a new Web Semantic based approach for E-tourism" demonstrated how technology advancements in the tourist industry have altered the interaction between client and provider. The association of companies in a database has also been shown to boost a tourism website's appeal in studies conducted within the sector. Web 3.0 solutions are also discussed in this essay. This technology provides for consumer profiling and dynamic response adaptation based on the website profile. This targeting enables for a more effective mix of tourist incentives. This method is built on semantic modelling of database data and user profiles. To enable this design, an adaptive hypermedia system has been developed. It is constructed with technologies based on the semantic web, and it uses 3 different models that is user, domain, as well as adaptability models.

Neuhofer (2013) states that though e-tourism is crucial, it is more about adaptability than it is about technology. Human capital, social capital, governance, and innovation are all smartness dimensions that have an impact on smart tourism. Open innovation, which is aided by investment opportunities in human as well as social capital and would go by participatory governance, is used to make tourism destinations more competitive as a whole, improve the social, economic, & environmental well-being of all interested parties, and create value for tourists.

Sadr (2013) points out, the TI was one of the first industries to embrace and apply information & communication technology (ICT). Although tourism is a distinctive business, instead of a service or industrial activity, it encompasses a wide range of industries. Marketing has undergone a radical makeover as a result of

technological advancements. Almost all forms of marketing can now be carried out digitally, under the umbrella term of "digital marketing (DM)." This has resulted in several adjustments. For example, digital marketing has changed both the way marketers think and how people think about marketing. People now see themselves as "co-creators," and new words like "crowdsourcing" have come into use. Digital marketing also concentrates on using "data" that is gathered from customers or potential customers.

Bang et al. (2014) applied a qualitative method to study digital marketing, concentrating on digital marketing strategies in the manufacturing industry. They found that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) mostly use their webpage as a digital platform. This study focuses on digital marketing in tourism, namely tourist arrivals, and illustrates the increase in visitor arrivals to India in 2000, 2014, 2017, and 2018.

An investigation into the efficiency of digital marketing in difficult times was conducted by Yasmin and colleagues (2015). It was shown that DM components like social media (SM) marketing and the internet have a substantial association with revenue growth. As per Yasmin, digital marketing may bring several services to consumers, namely: being aware of new items and services, increased participation, transparent service and product details, easy comparability with the others, 24/7 purchasing, exchanging product or service information, transparent pricing and fast buying .As per the writer, there are seven parts to digital marketing. They are web marketing, e-mail marketing, SM marketing, messaging services, affiliate marketing, SEO (search engine optimization), as well as PPC (pay per click).

Digiorgio (2016), websites are considered a company's place of operation, and the online is the primary focus of marketing activities. It is easier to persuade and rely on a website as a trustworthy source if it is subject to a high level of institutional oversight. Website material should be targeted, relevant, and complete, and it should be updated on a regular basis. Websites seek to engage consumers directly by sustaining communicative engagements, so removing intermediaries, and fostering client loyalty to the brand. d. In the early stages of their search, tourists utilise search engines to get travel-related information about places. After that, travellers visit the venues' websites. Websites may gain improved visibility and

revenue by utilising SEO, which is the use of search methods (like the usage of keywords) to promote traffic.

Dubbudu (2016), travellers choose online services to book their vacation plans over traditional offline ones. The proportion of these people is increasing with each day, and in the EU (European Union), it is now sixty percent for air transportation, fifty-five percent for hotel, and fifty percent for train or waterways tickets. Tourism information services are growing considerably in India, with e-ticketing booking as well as hotel facilities witnessing significant growth. Rail ticket sales increased by 16 percent in the past five years, reaching 54.52 percent in 2014-15, up from 38.54 percent in 2011-12. Online TS (travel sales) in India increased by six hundred percent from US$5.37 billion in 2010 to US$30.61 billion in 2016 (Online TS, 2017)[2].

When it comes to online tourism, it's not just about surfing the web or using smartphone apps.; it's also about implementing digital resources like mobile payments, which are becoming increasingly popular around the world as an alternative to cash, cheques, or bank cards. As per Peng and colleagues (2012), mobile payment (MP) is the use of a smart phone to complete a tourism money transfer wherein cash or funds are sent from a payer to a recipient either by a middleman or directly at the tourist location without the requirement for a middleman. Tourists use mobile wallets (MW) to spend money on things with their phones. A mobile wallet is a phone which has been loaded with information (info.) about the user. This lets the user pay for things using wireless technologies like "near field communication (NFC)", "radio frequency identification (RFID)", and "unstructured supplementary service data (USSD)."

Keckes & Tomicic (2017) cited that technology innovation is very important for individuals in the travel and tourism industries. An augmented reality (AR)experience can have a significant impact on tourism in a number of ways. This article presents a review of a research that contributes to the adaptability issues connected with AR in urban tourism contexts. These obstacles help in sustaining social unrest, social rehabilitation, as well as involvement in tourism

[2]*Revenue of online gross travel bookings worldwide 2011-2017* (no date) *Statista*. Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/238852/online-travel-bookings-worldwide/ (Accessed: June 13, 2022).

facilities. Tourism and social well-being depend on the expansion of digital technologies and SM platforms, according to the findings of the study.

Barrado-Timón et al. (2019) performed research into the influence of augmented and virtual reality on the conceptualization, interpretation, and usage of urban historic places. The study's results and assumptions suggest that the worries about the harmful elements are low. Observations showed that there could be issues, like the trivialization of history and the formation of digital tourist worlds that are different from the real galaxy of people with similar incomes.

Haneef (2017) mentioned in his study that tourist marketers may leverage big data in content development. The vast majority of marketing information that is produced by marketers and viewed by travellers online is designed to raise awareness or entice customers to buy, join, or know more about the goods. With the help of big data (BD), businesses can better comprehend their customers and potential customers. So, applying BD makes it possible to create important and informative content which can bring in and retain customers. Also, tourism businesses should make sure that their marketing strategies match what visitors want by setting up, maximising, and modifying their online platforms to meet the goals of the organisation.

Bala & Verma (2018) performed a complete review of digital marketing. Customers are increasingly turning to the internet to find the best deals, as per the study's findings, and this trend is expected to continue. In addition, Bala and Verma indicated that knowing which SM sites a firm's target market uses is an additional essential component in order to guarantee the efficacy of its digital marketing. Other investigators looked into social marketing and found that in tourism, particularly in winemakers, most operators know that social marketing has social, economic, as well as emotional benefits, but they don't use it to its maximum potential because of problems like the fact that social marketing takes a lot of time (Canovi and Pucciarelli, 2019).

Tussyadiah et al. (2018) contend that virtual reality should be used in tourist destination premises. According to Tussyadiah et al., virtual reality in tourism provides more relevant material for tourism. It also opens up fresh perspectives and more valuable material for tourists. It is also offering up fresh perspectives and purposes for destination tourism. The survey included 900 Hong Kong residents for destination tourism. The results demonstrate that the virtual environment boosts

the experience of visitors. According to the conclusions of a UK research, the virtual environment boosts visitors' satisfaction of the virtual reality experience. The research also indicated that the virtual reality experience leads to positive attitude modification. The research also found that positive attitude change leads to increased visiting intention to a tourism site. The empirical outcomes of the study reveal that virtual reality influences customer perceptions and behaviour toward virtual reality.

Mkwizu (2019) conducted research on social media marketing with an Indian case study, examining the challenges of social media marketing in India, and proposed that marketers can use passive marketing tools as sources of marketing intelligence, as well as active marketing tools, which include platforms for communication, promotion, brand awareness, consumer interaction, and a feedback mechanism. According to the researcher, the 5 main aspects of digital marketing for Indian businesses to focus on in 2019 are original content, capital employed, integrated marketing & communications, customer experience, as well as block chain technology.

Odyssey (2019)[3], since over half of Nigeria's populace owns a smartphone, mobile marketing represents a significant opportunity for businesses looking to expand their consumer base in the country in 2019.Earlier studies has shown that digital phone makes it possible for people to browse online booking in a variety of ways and on a variety of devices. Also, Stringam et al. (2019) pointed out how important it is to improve load speeds to capture potential customers who look at hotel websites, so that it doesn't take too long for hotel websites to load

Buhalis & Sinarta (2019), consequently tourists should engage with businesses that respond promptly and round the world. Face-to-face service team have been successful because of their ability to resolve customer difficulties with honesty and warmth, and to create true connections with customers. Meanwhile, as companies move to the internet to better engage with customers in the digital world, their occupations have grown. Chatbots have been used by destinations to incorporate technology into frontline customer encounters. Chatbots are machine conversation systems designed to mimic human interactions. The term "virtual service agent" is also used to describe them. Customer satisfaction is enhanced by the incorporation

[3] www.digitalodyssey.net/blog/top-digital-marketing-trends-nigeria-2019/

of chatbots into the service offerings of tourism companies. Chatbots are pre-programmed with certain abilities to assist clients in finding restaurants, making hotel bookings, and purchasing things. Chatbots deliver accurate information as well as real-time engagement. Using chatbots can help people go to regions where they don't speak the same language as their native tongue because of the widespread use of tourism and its attendant mobility. Use of digital marketing platforms like websites and chatbots together offers a big development opportunity for businesses.

Bogicevic et al. (2019) recently completed an empirical tourist study. He carried out an empirical investigation to identify potential destination marketing using digital marketing technologies. Investigate prospective destination marketing opportunities using digital marketing tools. The article's conclusions and findings reveal that digital preview prompts elaboration toward the visual and powerful sensation of presence. The study also reveals that virtual reality has a significant number of images and a strong sensation of presence. In addition, the study found that VR has a role to play in encouraging people to "daydream" regarding housing options before actually visiting the place.

Rejón-Guardia & colleagues (2020) conducted a study to determine the elements that influence visitors' intentions to visit virtual reality locations. Using a stimulus-organism-response (SOR) paradigm, the author created a theoretical framework that included genuine experience, cognitive and emotive reactions, attachment, and visit intention with VR tourism. The study's results suggest that virtual reality connection considerably enhances the desire to visit locations. The authors also suggest that visitors who visit the sites are more likely to be obsessed with virtual reality.

Zillinger (2020) states that paper maps and guidebooks are gradually becoming obsolete, and are being replaced with interactive smartphone apps. In spite of their promise, travel apps have not yet reached their full potential, but the number of people using and downloading mobile apps for this reason is on the rise. Itinerary generators, geotracking assistance, weather or climate predictions, language converter, global clock time converters, location-based emergency responders, and service connection are just some of the features that may be found in travel apps. Travellers may be more casual in their preparation as they always have their telephones with them, and tourists are discovering it quicker to arrange vacations

utilising the functions of travel applications. Current use statistics indicate that mobile travel apps are a growing niche that is being created with new and enhanced capabilities. Current use data reveal that mobile travel applications are a rising segment which is being built with new and increased functionality. Current travel apps commonly incorporate in-app messaging as well as push notifications, as per statistics.

Molina & colleagues (2020), tourism businesses now have strategic & tactical instruments to improve their efficiency and competitiveness due to the consistent technological advancements in the marketing industry. As a result, businesses should focus on creating travel apps that highlight the unique selling points of their organisation or area. In order to boost a company's reputation, travel applications might include social network integrations that allow users to post ratings, feedback, and other comments about their experiences.

Kononova (2020), travel blogging is projected to become increasingly significant in consumers' travel decisions in the coming years. All of these aspects of a tourist's decision-making procedure are addressed by travel blogging: before the journey, information gathering, purchasing, using products, and reflecting on the trip after the fact. Information about where to go, what to see, what to do, weather forecasts, currency values, and up-to-date expenses are all sought out by travellers during the pre-purchase procedure. When it comes to planning a trip, many people turn to travel bloggers for advice, discounts, and deals that are only available to those who book last-minute. To put it another way, blogging helps people plan for their trips. The access of travel info. has increased the comfort level of travellers, so they are more inclined to use travel blogs in the future. Since readers depend on bloggers' personal experiences to help guide their own travel plans, the number of people turning to them for travel advice is on the rise. Online superstars (also called "influencers") that have a large following on one or more SM platforms can be used by marketers so as to influence their audience through content distribution and blogging on those networks. These SM influencers encourage tourist locations and businesses to their followers as well as the target audience of the organisation through the content they post on their own SM platforms.

Chamboko & Tichaawa (2021) opined that digital technology have changed the marketing guidelines and the way tourism locations are marketed online. Use of DM technologies that are carefully selected increases marketing initiatives and

reduces marketing costs. There are many internet platforms in the tourist industry, so it's important for marketers to be aware of how customers get info. and to discover effective marketing tools and tactics that help them make the most money possible. IN the past, DM was simple: platforms were run by business owners with a sole emphasis on business interests. Now, however, new sites have emerged with various functions, making it important to understand how DM tools work in the tourism context in order to use them effectively. As per the researchers, having knowledge of DM and being able to make full use of the potential offered by technology related to DM are two of the most important factors in achieving success in the tourism industry.

Gossling (2021), social media, as an integral component of digital marketing, plays a vital part in the decision-making process. Prior to participating in a tourism activity, 55% of individuals visit social media sites connected to the trip they are planned. SM as well as blog sites are used by thirty-six percent of visitors from the US, the UK and Canada, whereas travel review sites are used by fifty-four percent. Tourists utilise TripAdvisor, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn in addition to Facebook. Travellers are more likely to research their destinations on Facebook (twenty-nine percent) than TripAdvisor (fourteen percent) or Twitter (six percent). SM is used during and after journey, not just before. In the midst of a vacation, seventy-two percent of Americans post vacation photos on SM, and seventy percent post updates on Facebook. After a vacation, seventy-six percent of people post pictures to SM, fifty-five percent like travel-related Facebook pages, and forty-six percent write hotel reviews.

Singh & Bashar (2021) points out that because of its capacity to replace physical tourism with virtual tourism, AR and VR may be regarded game changers in the tourist business. VR is no more a specialised technology that is exclusively loved by gaming communities; instead, it has made its way into the world of everyday experiences and is rapidly being applied for a variety of purposes, including marketing, education, leisure, and tourism. Visitors can experience places (like the wilderness) even when they are in the town or at home on their computers, because there is a lot of tourism-related VR content and cheap VR devices. Adoption of VR by destinations and tourist enterprises presents chances for marketing, extra income generating, sustainability, and heritage preservation. From the standpoint

of travellers, AR and VR are advantageous since they improve tourism experiences by simulating real-world physical environment interaction.

Goo (2022), the usage of digital storytelling (DS) in travel websites (the sharing of personal narratives in digital formats using audio & graphic representations) both encourages and inspires travellers to visit locations that are designated as tourist destinations.DS lets people show what it was like to be a tourist by using audio clips, pictures, and videos. This gives a real record of what happened. It makes people want to travel by getting them to use their fantasies, building up their excitement, and making the experience last longer. As tourist industry digital marketers evolve into modern DS who are capable of recording the interest of prospective travellers, it is almost certain that the use of influencers in the form of travel bloggers in combination with DS will become increasingly popular. This trend is almost certain to occur because it is inevitable that it will.

Research Gap

Prior research shows that tourism industries across the World are increasing relying on Information Communication Technology (ICT), especially the World Wide Web (WWW). The WWW has revolutionized the tourism industry (Buhalis & Zoge, 2007) changing the entire value chain of tourism creation, marketing, distribution & consumption. Research aiming to measuring or accesson Information Communication Technology (ICT) in tourism has mainly focused on evaluating the success or performance of websites or challenges faced by particulars tourism sector such as travel agencies.

However, there is a need for research that attempts to understand the factors and processes affecting the adoption and integration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) at destination level & it sought to identify the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats presenting in e-tourism in Himanchal Pradesh. The investigation is mostly focused on the level of knowledge and how travel companies see themselves as hosts in chosen e-tourism web pages under "IDIPT (Infrastructure Development Investment Program for Tourism) in Kullu, Shimla, Dharmshala, as well as Mandi districts of Himachal Pradesh, as well as how tourists who come to the hill areas via such gateway locations feel about e-tourism. The research area has been limited to just four of the districts in Himachal Pradesh where the initiative is being done with the goal of developing local people's

capabilities via community-based tourism activities. The research begins as an exploratory one, but as it went on, it became more descriptive and came to a conclusion. Most of the data came from primary sources, which were travel agencies that were either directly or indirectly involved with tourism (direct or indirect stakeholders). The data comes from 448 hosts in HP four selected regions.

Research Questions

1. What are the opportunities for development that exist in the field of e-tourism in HP?
2. What role does social &economic demographics of the host community lay in accepting e-tourism product decision making (Both for selling and purchasing)?
3. What is the role of HP tourism industry in the use of digitised tools and processes?
4. What is the use of digital marketing to make the tourists aware about their travel product?
5. What is the awareness level of the travel agencies in HP regarding computers and e-tourism?
6. What is the indulgence level of the travel agencies in HP in e-tourism activities in specific?
7. What are the possible solutions to overcome the challenges that e-tourism faces in selected sample areas?
8. What effect does the emergence of e-tourism as a tool for digital inclusiveness have on the patterns of business exchange in chosen population area?
9. What is the distinction between the ideas of e-tourism and smart tourism and how can they be interlinked for enhanced results?
10. What is the role of e-tourism in providing solutions to problems related to mass tourism?
11. What is the relevance of digitalization in the future growth of destinations and their transition to smart destinations?
12. What are the actualities and possibilities of conducting the research in light of previous researches done?
13. What is the inclination of tourists towards e-tourism in HP?

Objectives of The Study

(Tourists Perspectives)

1. To study the perspectives of tourists in context of E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh.
2. To discover or identify different challenges faced by tourists regarding E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh.
3. To examine the impact of E-Tourism on the tourism experience of the tourists.
4. To identify and analyze the factors influencing tourists' usage and adoption of E-Tourism services.

(Tourism Operators Perspectives)

5. To analyse the benefits and challenges of E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh from the perspectives of tourism operators.
6. To examine the strategies and policies adopted by the government and private sector to Promote E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh
7. To evaluate the role of digital marketing tools, social media, and online reviews in Promoting E-tourism in Himachal Pradesh.
8. To identify the factors that affect the adoption of E-Tourism by tourism operators in Himachal Pradesh.
9. To study the impact of E-Tourism on the development of the tourism industry.

Research Hypothesis

(Tourists Perspectives)

H1: Tourists in Himachal Pradesh have a positive perception of e-tourism and perceive it as a valuable tool for trip planning, information retrieval, and enhancing their overall travel experience.

H0: There is no significant difference in the perspectives of tourists regarding e-tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

H1: Tourists in Himachal Pradesh encounter various challenges in utilizing e-tourism platforms, such as limited internet connectivity, language barriers, technical difficulties, and lack of awareness about available services.

H0: There are no significant challenges faced by tourists in the context of e-tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

H1: E-tourism significantly enhances the overall tourism experience of visitors in Himachal Pradesh, leading to improved trip planning, access to relevant information, and increased engagement with local culture and attractions.

H0: There is no significant impact of e-tourism on the overall tourism experience of visitors in Himachal Pradesh.

H1: Factors such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust in technology, prior experience with e-tourism, and demographic characteristics (e.g., age, education, income) significantly influence tourists' adoption and usage of e-tourism services in Himachal Pradesh.

H0: There are no significant factors influencing tourists' adoption and usage of e-tourism services in Himachal Pradesh.

(Tourism Operators Perspectives)

H1: There is a significant difference in the perceptions of tourism operators regarding the benefits and challenges of E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

H0: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of tourism operators regarding the benefits and challenges of E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

H1: There is a significant difference in the strategies and policies adopted by the government and private sector to promote E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

H0: There is no significant difference in the strategies and policies adopted by the government and private sector to promote E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the use of digital marketing tools, social media, and online reviews and the promotion of E-tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

H0: There is no significant relationship between the use of digital marketing tools, social media, and online reviews and the promotion of E-tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

H1: The factors identified significantly affect the adoption of E-Tourism by tourism operators in Himachal Pradesh.

H0: The factors identified do not significantly affect the adoption of E-Tourism by tourism operators in Himachal Pradesh.

H1: There is a significant impact of E-Tourism on the development of the tourism industry.

H0: There is no significant impact of E-Tourism on the development of the tourism industry.

Conceptual Framework

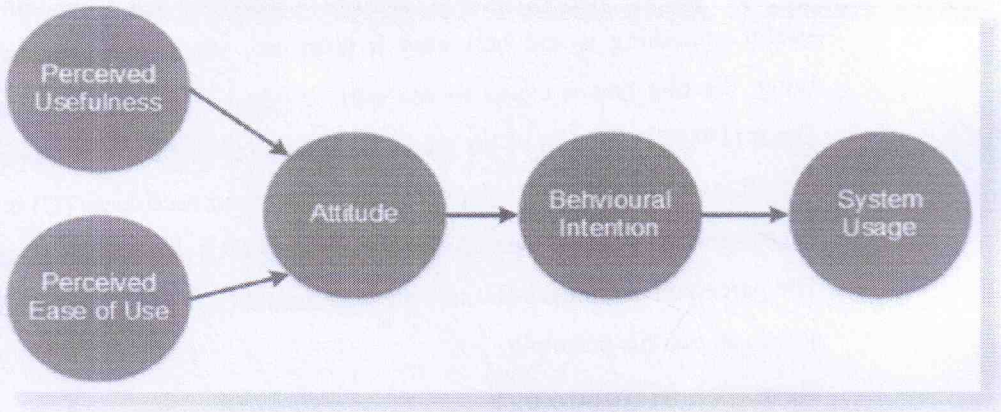

Figure 1: The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Fred Davis (1989)[4]

Source: Davis & Marangunić,(1989), 'user acceptance of computer technology. A comparison of two theoretical models', Management Science 35(8),982-1003. http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/mnsc35.8.982

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)is a social psychology model founded on the "TRA (Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980)". Davis asserted that perceived usefulness (U) and perceived ease of use (EOU) are "very significant for computer adoption behaviours" (Davis, 1989, S. 985). Perceived usefulness (U) is defined as "the subjective likelihood that adopting a given application system would improve his or her work performance within an organisational setting" by a prospective user. The "degree to which the prospective user anticipates the target system to be free of effort" is well-defined as perceived ease of use (EOU). The purpose of this model is to predict the acceptability of a method and to identify the modifications required to make the system acceptable to consumers. As per this theory, the acceptability of an information system (IS) is determined by two major elements: perceived usefulness (U)and perceived ease of use (EOU). Reasoned action theory illustrates the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) premise that the intent to use an information system (IS) is influenced by the user's attitude and perception of the system's utility as well as the behaviour intended to achieve that purpose. Davis stated that a person's use of a system is affected not only by his or her attitude, but also by how it might affect his or her

[4] Davis & Marangunić,(1989) *The Technology Acceptance Model*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

performance. When an employee doesn't like a new information system, he or she is likely to use it if they think it will help them do their job better. Also, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) says that there is a direct link between how useful something is and how easy it is to use. When two systems do the same thing, the one that is easier to use will be better. Notably, the data provided by Davis (1989) in support of his model indicated a strong correlation between desires to utilize an information system (IS) with perceived usefulness (U) is stronger than the association between perceived ease of use (EOU) and perceived usefulness (U). The perceived usefulness (U) of a method should be the most influencing factor for a user, as per this principle.

Research Methodology

Rationale of the Study

To comprehend the potential of electronic tourism and its impact on the state's tourism industry, it is important to understand the perspectives and problems of E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh. Himachal Pradesh is a well-liked tourist destination because of its natural beauty, culture, and adventure tourism. E-Tourism is becoming a crucial instrument for promoting tourism in the state due to the rise in internet and mobile device use.

The study will examine E-Tourism's various facets, including its advantages, disadvantages, and prospects for the future. It will also look at the use of E-Tourism by the state government and private tourism businesses, as well as how this has affected the regional economy. In order to promote tourism in Himachal Pradesh, the study will examine how social media, online reviews, and other digital marketing tools are used.

The limited usage of digital technology due to intermittent internet connectivity in some rural areas in Himachal Pradesh is one of the problems with E-Tourism. Another difficulty is the lack of qualified individuals who can successfully manage and use E-Tourism products. Additionally, it's important to make sure that E-Tourism doesn't negatively impact the nature and culture of the region.

The study will offer insights into the potential of E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh as well as the issues that must be resolved in order to maximise its advantages. The results can be utilised to create strategies and policies that support sustainable

tourism in the state and make sure the neighbourhood gains from the expansion of the travel and tourism sector.

Research Design

The Research design chosen for this study is exploratory at first, using a pilot survey, and then it gets more descriptive and comes to a conclusion. The goal of testing different hypotheses with a large sample size as well as a representative population is to help the researcher figure out how the different variables relate to each other and explain the results. The current study design, which is conclusive, was chosen with the expectation that it would be of use to policymakers in identifying, analysing, and choosing the appropriate specific course of action from which to make policy judgments in a given circumstance.

It is important for researchers to take their time when selecting the sampling method as well as the sampling unit. The current research study focused on multistage sampling for the chosen research regions, and the standard deviation (SD) method of sampling has been implemented to choose the travel companies and among tourists. This is because there are limitations on the resources that can be used for the investigation. All the travel agencies within the 4 districts of Himachal Pradesh, namely Shimla, Kullu, Dharmshala & Mandi, are considered as the population area for this study. As per Himachal Government Tourism statistics, following is a list of the number of travel agencies in the chosen 4 districts:

District	No. of Travel Agencies
Shimla	978
Kullu	1374
Kangra(Dharmshala)	69
Mandi	115
Total	2536

Source: Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of Himachal Pradesh

Thus, the area of population chosen for this research study is 2536. The researcher decided to use the standard deviation sampling technique to determine the optimal number of survey participants. In this method, a proportion of people is chosen at random for sampling, and it is presumptively determined that the sample characteristics are representative of the whole population. The sample size for this

study was estimated using the function indicated in the figure below, according to the approach employed by Tengeh and Talom (2019).

$$n = \frac{z\,2 \times \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})}{\varepsilon\,2}$$

where

z is the z score

ε is the margin of error

N is the population size

n is the sample size

$\hat{p}$ is the population proportion

As demonstrated in Table 1, these estimates were used to figure out the size of the sample: In this research, a SS (sample size) of 448 valid responses will be needed, which are more depended or use the ICT mode. This is within the statistical requirements for information processing in quantitative research, with a confidence level of ninety-eighty percept and a margin of error of five percept. It is common in statistics to draw conclusions about a population after conducting research on a small sample, namely the populace is selected and its traits are thought to be representative of the population as a whole. For the following, it is assumed that "there is a population of individuals where some proportion **(p)** of the population is distinguishable from the other **(1-p)** in some way. The confidence interval depends on the sample size **(n)** (the variance of the sample distribution is inversely proportional to **n**, meaning that the estimate gets closer to the true proportion as **n** increases); thus, an acceptable error rate in the estimate can also be set, called the margin of error **(ε)** and solved for the sample size required for the chosen confidence interval to be smaller than **(e)** a calculation known as sample size calculation. Z-score **(z)** indicates how much a given value differs from the standard deviation." In broad sense, a Z-score of less than 1.8 means that a firm might be going bankrupt, whereas a score nearer to three means that a firm's finances are in good shape. Alpha, the probability of making a mistake, shows a researcher's willingness to reject the null hypothesis when it is set to 0.05 or 0.01. The greater

the alpha value, the lower the chance of making a mistake, which improves the calculation's precision.[5]

Table 1. Formula for calculation of Sample Size

Confidence Level (e)	98%
Population proportion	50%
Margin of error	5%
Population size	2563
Alpha	0.03
Z-score	1.96
Sample size	448

As a result, a Sample size of 448 travel companies will be chosen for this current study.

The current research study also focused on tourists within the 4 districts of Himachal Pradesh, namely Shimla, Kullu, Dharmshala & Mandi, are considered as the population area for this study. As, the target population of my study is very large. For population that are large, Cochan(1963), developed the equation to yield representative sample.

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 \times pq}{\varepsilon^2}$$

Where,

ε is the margin of error

p is the population proportion

q is defined as **(1-p)**

z^2 is the abscissa of the normal curve that cuts an area at the tails(1-alpha equals the desired confidence level, e.g. 95%). This is also termed as critical value which can be calculated using Z table.

[5] https://www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator.html

Table 2. Formula for calculation of Sample Size[6]

Sample Size Calculation Formula for Infinite Population. Z is the critical value (1.96), e is the margin of error (5%), and P is the population proportion P (85%).		
$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$	Z^2	3.8416
	P	0.5
	q	0.50
	E^2	0.0025
	Z^2*P*Q	0.9604
Final Sample Size	Z^2*P*Q/E^2	**384**

If we don't Known the P exact value the we can Use P as 50%. What does it mean. This mean the target population has 50% chance to either impacted/influenced or effected by the treatment.

[6] https://www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator.html

As a result, a Sample size of 384 tourists will be chosen for this current study.

Data Collection

The information for this study came from both first-hand and second-hand sources. Primary sources have been the most important part of the research work, which has been exploratory, then descriptive, and has now come to a conclusion. Secondary data sources include studies from the HP Department of Tourism, Government Documents, Periodicals, Case Studies, and other relevant materials. A well-designed and organised questionnaire (questionnaire) for selected travel companies and among tourists from the four provinces will be used to gather primary research data. In order to facilitate communication with the local community (the host community), the questionnaires will be drafted in English medium only. For the research, the set of questions will be separated into two sections. The 1st part will ask about the respondents' demographics, and the part 2 will ask about different aspects of e-tourism in HP through a series of independent statements. The five-point Likert scale will be used to measure how people feel about these statements. The sample period selection is a main hindrance in the tourism research due to factors associated with the limitations in tourism research (Swarbrooke, 2006). Efforts of the researcher cannot be underestimated to overcome this problem and

focus to provide ready solutions in the study area. Seasonality, one of the prime constraints in the research will be taken care of by dividing the research work based on the peak and lean season in the field under study. The peak season for tourism is from April – June and from October- November the reasons associated with the same is the prevailing of hot weather conditions in the plains most of the people come to the hill states of the country (India). Himachal being a major hill state, the peak season will be appropriate to gather the right set of information. July – September is taken as lean season time due to peak of monsoon rains in the region making it difficult for the tourists to travel due to landslides and other problems with the tourist traffic movement and December – March is also a hindrance for easy tourist traffic movement due to snowfall in the region.

Data Analysis

The current research will be carried out with the use of a structured questionnaire that will be created by consulting a variety of different sources of information. The primary instruments will be selected, and the present study will make use of the SPSS programme, which is a statistical tool for evaluating research data, to conduct its analysis. A secondary data analysis will simply be carried out as part of a review of the research's chosen publications in order to provide supporting material that would confirm the study's results, rather than as a stand-alone procedure.

Problem Statement

There is no doubt that a tourist website is the most effective instrument for promoting a place. Nonetheless, a website is a promotional tool that constantly has room for development and progress. The website's content and features should be improved to fulfil the demands of tourists in the present market. "Digital information technologies" have had a big impact on the tourism industry and will continue to do so. Travel will remain one of the most prominent internet consumer hobbies. The availability of the Internet and mobile communication devices will expand the amount of electronic links that clients have with the tourist business. Since digital eras are changing the demographics and habits of internet users, people will look to the internet as their leading contributor for travel information to help. As more emotional intelligence devices are made, it will be essential to add psychological and emotional requirement scope to make conversations and

interaction more beneficial. A growing number of people are using blogs and podcasts to help them plan their trips as well as to help them remember their experiences in the comment phase of their travels. Such applications will be increasingly required to be integrated into tourism and travel websites and apps. New technologies are being created at an accelerating rate, and their influence on tourism will be enormous. These will disrupt conventional tourist value chains, resulting in the creation of new tourism sector actors and a considerable impact on customer experiences. According to the available research, advances and changes in the technical environment are relatively unclear (Liu and colleagues, 2014; Fang and colleagues, 2016), and in order to survive in the highly competitive period, the tourist business must keep an eye on technological issues (Szopinski et al., 2016). As a result, it necessitates comprehensive demonstrations of the contributions of various studies in the e-tourism study domain. The majority of studies exist on the particular framework employed, its limitations, and future research objectives. Intellectual activities, keywords used, most prolific publications, annual average production co-occurrence of keywords as well as network mapping have not been taken into consideration in earlier research on the subject of e-tourism in the past (Hsiao and colleagues, 2015; Johnson et al., 2019).The current work is an attempt to fill a comprehensive research gap through the use of a systematic exploratory analysis in order to augment the results of prior studies and provide a clear roadmap for the conduct of additional future research. Research and academic advancements in the tourism industry may be made possible if the factors that lie behind the recent accomplishments in e-tourism research are determined.

To reap the benefits of e-tourism, it is vital to endeavour to overcome the challenges that this technology presents in addition to supporting the infrastructure associated with its applications and the growth of this industry. The purpose of this research is to demonstrate the significance of employing technology in the tourism sector of Himachal Pradesh by assessing the phenomena of e-tourism and studying its actuality and possibilities in light of previous researches. In addition to researching the scope of e-tourism application and the challenges it encounters in this sector, the research will concentrate on defining the many ideas of e-tourism, their origins and growth, as well as their domains and economic implications. The reality of e-tourism is also investigated and assessed by providing the Himachal

Pradesh state's experience in the sectors of information and communication technology, as well as e-tourism activities.

Scope of Research

Technology has made it possible to connect businesses in different places, with different cultures, and in different kinds of businesses. But these technologies aren't available in a lot of areas around the globe. This is especially true in countries on the way up.As a result of these issues, the term "digital divide" has been coined. It's a reflection of, say, the economic and social disparity between 2 counties or groups. Even more so for countries with a digital divide, it is imperative for them to join and participate in the new Information Age. Should they fail to do so, they may find themselves on the periphery of the e-tourism industry, cut off from a wide range of opportunities, innovations, and possibilities. E-tourism approaches for development must be kept in mind when designing regional and national plans for e-tourism in underdeveloped countries. These countries should conduct appropriate research and construct their plans whilst keeping the larger structure of e-tourism plans in mind.

E-tourism projects in various nations are different, and a sharing of opinions could help developing nations use new methods. As a potential source of new ideas and approaches to overcoming barriers to ICT adoption at various levels within the industry, such as between businesses and consumers, it has the potential to do so. By bridging the digital divide, many emerging nations will be able to better sell their products, grow their customer base, and join forces in trade coalitions'- tourism will provide information to tourist stakeholders all around the world. It might boost sales and bring more money into the local economy. Tourism can help to rectify the imbalance between competing sites in global marketplaces.

Developing nations should be more active in their efforts to comprehend the consequences of ICT innovations in the tourist sector. Policymakers should be a part of the planning and implementation procedure to make it more effective and tactical. It is currently thought that e-development plans should be a component of all policy planning. It also involves tourism-related policy planning. In order for e-tourism to thrive in a nation like India, greater and deeper study in the domain is required.

Further, e-tourism may be used to promote extensive and intense rural tourism. Rural tourism may be a major economic activity and a critical component of agriculture and rural development. It allows farmers to earn directly from tourists while also creating new markets for agricultural goods in the area. Rural tourist activities may be simplified to assist sustainable development, making it both user and environmentally friendly. In contrast to industrial tourism, rural e-tourism is generally individual focused and may or may not have a wide appeal. Budget restrictions are unavoidable since small farmers sometimes lack the means to sell and promote their goods. Rural e-tourism has the potential to mainstream many old historical monuments, galleries, museums, theatres, and locations. Unknown heritages such as historic castles, buildings, and villages may be rediscovered while those in ruins are salvaged and repaired. It is critical to develop a user-friendly model for rural tourism that takes into account ICT tools, cultural policy, the state, and the local area. Local community information may also be used to protest and conserve cultural heritage.

The use of technology in tourism may have a substantial influence on historic site maintenance and development. However, political and cultural policies must be involved to make e-tourism applications relevant. Another impediment to the development of local cultural assets using internet technologies is that it is the focus of programmes aimed at the local people. While the tourist industry's key players have utilised e-tourism tools for sales and advertising, the cultural sector has yet to recognise the potential of internet applications for cultural asset preservation. They have yet to realise that historical preservation may be accomplished via e-tourism. Sustainable tourism may be used to preserve and develop natural and cultural assets, and e-tourism can offer up new opportunities for cultural and tourist policy by combining resource protection and development. Using the points of convergence between the cultural sector and the tourist industry, a shared technology-based heritage tourism development plan may be developed. A regionally shared plan for the cultural and tourist sectors might be a suitable response to the main issues connected with e-tourism growth. It achieves a careful balance between historic accessibility and preservation. The dynamics of information sharing among travel agencies have also changed dramatically in recent years. The industry has become more difficult as a result of significant changes in distribution and sales. Distribution collaboration is growing. While

transportation firms now provide the ability to book lodging, destination management groups are establishing an online gateway to disseminate information. Understanding the Tourism Value Net is critical for tourism professionals. They must also be familiar with the industry's key players. A statistical database should be created, and study should be conducted. Such information should be available to educational institutions. E-tourism based courses should be promoted by educational institutions. It needs to be complemented with professional training and also field-based instruction and real-world experience. Tour operators, tour companies, hotels, technology providers, and others involved in the tourism business should build a network and maintain regular contact in order to lay the groundwork for a strong foundation of tourism and navigation skills.

Expected Outcomes

The tourism sector in India is in its early stages of development, with a large variety of tourist locations to draw both local and foreign visitors. India's economic potential has increased with the introduction of low-cost aeroplane services. However, the visitor satisfaction level in terms of e-tourism in India is low. In terms of competitiveness, the UNWTO ranks India's tourist sector at 61st. In 2019, the number of incoming visitors surpassed one billion. As a result, Indian tourism has been strengthened in order to attract the greatest number of local and foreign visitors. According to this research, e-tourism plays a critical role in marketing, integrating, and establishing brand loyalty in Indian tourism. The research also examines the evolution and significance of digital marketing in e-tourism, as well as digitalisation or digital transformation processes in tourism and hospitality. The goal of this study is to clarify the distinction between the ideas of e-tourism and smart tourism, as well as to demonstrate the relevance of digitalization in the future growth of destinations and their transition to smart destinations. This sort of tourism, according to the principles of a prospective and challenging approach to the region, should have as minimal influence on the environment as possible, decreasing the human impact (good or negative) while optimising the economic impact.

Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 Introduction This chapter provides an overall understanding of a problem and its background with historical perspective. This chapter showcases the

internet development and its spread to the world with more focus on disparity, digital divide, diffusion and development.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the literature review with elaborate development of idea on information importance and it use in e-tourism. The chapter focuses on different segments on travel and tourism and use of internet technology. Theories of e-tourism adoption and decision making and general models of decision making in tourism has been researched to attain the objectives of study. The worldwide scenario of e-tourism and more focus to India has been discussed in detail. The chapter delivers on the constructs for the study undertaken.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology for the entire research work with need of the study, scope of the study, methodology, instrument, data collection, sampling method, sample size, selection of stakeholders. The chapter also focuses on the operational zing the research works with the research design selected for the research.

Chapter 4 Results

This chapter provides data interpretation and analysis of the research work carried out based on the problem identified, objectives set and hypothesis tested. The exploratory work on digital divide and e-tourism in chosen areas of Himachal Pradesh is based on the close ended questions divided into various segments to understand the skills, usage, and attitude gap of the sample respondents.

Chapter 5 Suggestions

This chapter focuses on how the effort has been made to make contribution to the body of knowledge while meeting the objectives of study. This chapter showcases the findings, gives suggestions and concludes the development of thesis.

Chapter 6 References

This Chapter will include all the sources, references and bibliography.

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CERTIFICATE

(SYNOPSIS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE)

This is to certify that the Synopsis for Ph.D. Thesis titled, **"Perspective and Challenges of E-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh"**, submitted by **Mr. Manoj Kumar** to the Career Point University, Hamirpur (H.P.), India in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** in the Department of Commerce & Management Studies, School of Management Studies & Liberal Arts and has presented with an Oral Examination which is held on 2nd July, 2022. The synopsis has been submitted by the student after incorporating all the recommendations given by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) on 23rd July, 2022 and approved by the RAC.

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